



# Kuttiyattam

*An Introduction*

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## K u t i y a t t a m

मध्ये दीपज्वलनमधुरे पार्श्वतः पाणिघस्त्री-  
चित्रीभूते सरसहृदयैर्भूसुरैर्भासिताग्रे ।  
पृष्ठे मार्दङ्गिकविलसिते रङ्गदेशे प्रविष्टः  
स्पष्टाकृतं नटयति नटः कोऽपि कञ्चित् प्रबन्धम्<sup>1</sup> ॥

It was with the so-called discovery of the Bhāsa plays and the controversy that followed it that Oriental scholars outside Kerala began to hear about the existence of a continuous stage tradition in Kerala, extending for more than ten centuries. It was pointed out by Kerala scholars like Prof. K. Rama Pisharoti<sup>2</sup> that many of the so-called newly discovered Bhāsa plays, as well as several well-known classical Sanskrit plays, were already being staged as a temple-art by hereditary communities of Cākyārs and Nambyārs, and that several manuscripts of these plays and detailed stage directions for their production were also available with many of these professional actors in Kerala. Some of the details regarding the staging of Sanskrit plays by the Cākyārs, known as *Kūttā* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* in Kerala (popularly known as *Koodiyāṭṭam*) have been dealt with by scholars like Prof. Rama Pisharoti.<sup>3</sup> Further study in the field has unearthed many more details<sup>4</sup>, and a general survey of the history and the present position of the staging of the Sanskrit plays in Kerala and its connection with the ancient system of staging Sanskrit plays throughout India seems necessary now. A detailed study of the manuscript material now available would shed much interesting light on the different aspects

<sup>1</sup> *Rasasadana Bhāṇa* by Godavarma.

<sup>2</sup> K. Rama Pisharoti, *IHQ*, I & V ; *BSOS*, V. For detailed bibliography see A. D. Pusalkar, *The Bhāsa Problem*.

<sup>3</sup> K. Rama Pisharoti, *The Kerala Theatre*, Annamalai University (reprinted as Chapter IX of *The Theatre of the Hindus*, Calcutta, 1955) ; Ammaman Thampuran, *Kūttum Kūṭiyāṭṭavum*, Trichur, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> K. Narayana Pisharoti, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, 1956 ; *Kalālokam*, Trichur, 1960.



of the Sanskrit stage in Kerala. Intensive studies, both descriptive and historical of *Kūṭṭa* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* would be of great value to the study of the Sanskrit stage in India. The intimate connection between the modern popular *Kathakali* and the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* has also to be brought out by an intensive comparative study of both.<sup>1</sup> The present paper is intended only to give a general survey of the field, and to show the scope for further study.

According to the Kerala tradition it was King Kulaśekhara Varman, author of the two dramas *Subhadrādhanañjaya* and the *Tapatīsaṁvaraṇa*, who was responsible for reforming the Sanskrit stage in Kerala. It is said that in this work he was ably helped by a Brahmin scholar, popularly known as Tolan. The innovations attributed to Tolan and the king are mainly<sup>2</sup> : (a) the introduction of the local language by the Vidūṣaka to explain the Sanskrit and Prakrit passages, (b) the addition of the humorous element by introducing extraneous matter such as the parody on the four *Puruṣārthas*, (c) the confining of the staging of Sanskrit plays as a temple-art to be performed exclusively by the Cākyār and the Nambyār community, and (d) pointing out in detail the procedure for acting many of the popular plays of the time. This tradition finds some support in the introductory passage of the *Vyaṅgyavyākhyā* commentary on the *Subhadrādhanañjaya* by a Brahmin scholar of Paramēśvaramaṅgalam. He says that the king sent for him, and with great affection and respect showed him the two dramas composed by the king himself ; the king told him that if the scholar-critic approved of his dramas, he would get them staged by actors. The king himself explained to the Brahmin in detail the method of acting each rôle, pointing out the suggested ideas in the text to be brought out by the actor.<sup>3</sup> The commentator says that it was on the basis

<sup>1</sup> R. V. Poduval pointed out long ago in his short book *The Art of Kathakali* (Trivandrum, p. 16) that Kathakali owes much to *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* : "The whole scheme of *abhinaya* (acting) and gestures were bodily adopted in the *Kathakali* from them in addition to its borrowing and refinement of facial make-up and costume. The *Kathakali* became more attractive and popular than the Cākyār *Kūṭṭa* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* in course of time, as unlike them its performance was not restricted to the precincts of the temple."

<sup>2</sup> Amman Thampuran, *op. cit.*, p. 25 f.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. K. Kunjunn Raja, *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature*, Madras University, 1958, p. 9 f.



of this explanation that he wrote the commentary. It is quite possible that this Brahmin is the same as Tolan whom tradition considers as the king's adviser in reforming the Sanskrit stage in Kerala. The date of King Kulaśekharavarman is about A. D. 900<sup>1</sup>; and all the available stage manuals of the Sanskrit plays in Kerala are generally attributed to Tolan; but it is obvious that minor changes and innovations have been taking place throughout the course of the development of the stage in Kerala.

It is true that at present in the whole of India it is only in Kerala that the traditional form of performing Sanskrit plays still survives; but a study of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the ancient Sanskrit plays, and the references from literary and historical sources shows clearly that many of the plays were enacted in the different parts of the country as dance-drama, and that the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* in Kerala is only a local variation and adaptation of the ancient all-India tradition of staging plays.<sup>2</sup> Hiuen-tsiang says, while describing the Buddhist monasteries in Mathura, that professional actors were brought to the monasteries and the stories about the conversion of Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana and others were enacted; that is evidently a reference to the staging of the *Śāriputraprakaraṇa* of Aśvaghoṣa.<sup>3</sup> I-tsing refers to the staging of the *Nāgānanda* of King Harṣa.<sup>4</sup> There is a detailed description of the staging of the first Act of Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī* in the *Kuṭṭanīmata* of the Kashmirian poet Dāmodara-gupta of the ninth century<sup>5</sup>; the close similarity of the details given there and the procedure now adopted in the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* in

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. V. Raghavan, 'Sanskrit Drama and Performance,' *Madras University Journal*, XXIX. i, 1957; 'Producing Sanskrit Plays', *Nāṭya*, Spring Number, 1959.

<sup>3</sup> Fa-hsien, (not Hiuen-tsiang): See *Chinese Literature*, 1956, part 3, p. 149: "Actors are hired to perform a play in which Śāriputra who was originally a Brahmin goes to Buddha to ask for ordination. The lives of Maudgalyaputra and Kaśyapa are also performed in this way" (in Mathura).

<sup>4</sup> *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, by I-tsing, edited by Takakusu, Oxford, 1896, p. 163 f.: "King Śīlāditya versified the story of the Bodhisattva Jimūtavāhana, who surrendered himself in the place of a Nāga. The version was set to music (*lit.* string and pipe). He had it performed by a band accompanied by dancing and acting and thus popularized it in his land."

<sup>5</sup> *Bibliotheca Indica* edition, p. 104 ff.



Kerala<sup>1</sup> shows that the Kerala tradition of staging Sanskrit plays follows, on the whole, the procedure adopted in other parts of India in ancient times. It is quite possible that along with the patronage for Sanskrit literature and culture given by the Pallava kings in the sixth and seventh centuries in South India, the staging of Sanskrit plays also received great support. We know that King Mahendravarman of the Pallava dynasty wrote the *Mattavilāsa Prahasana*<sup>2</sup>; the *Bhagavadajjukīya*<sup>3</sup>, another popular *Prahasana*, also seems to have come from the same place and the same period. The two plays, *Nāgānanda* and *Ratnāvalī* of King Harṣa, were also popular with the actors and the people. The staging of some of the 'Bhāsa' plays might have also started in the Pallava court; the reference to King Rājasiṃha in the Bhāsa plays<sup>4</sup> might be to the great Pallava king of that name, though we cannot be certain. This Sanskrit influence must have spread to Kerala from the Pallava capital; we have clear evidence on the close contact between Kāñcī and Kerala during that period. The great Daṇḍin had a scholar-friend in Kerala named Mātrdatta, as is stated in the *Avantisundarikathā*.<sup>5</sup> The Kerala tradition does not say that King Kuḷasekharavarman founded the Sanskrit stage; it only says that he revived it and reformed it.<sup>6</sup> Works like the *Kuṭṭanīmata* must have influenced the Kerala stage considerably. The implications of the statement in the prologue of the *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi* about the absence of good dramas in the south<sup>7</sup> must be studied in this all-India background. It is fairly certain that Śaktibhadra was slightly earlier than the dramatist Kuḷasekharavarman.

In the Tamil classic *Cilappatikāram* there is a reference to the *Koṭṭicceta* dance performed by Parayūr Kūttaccākkaiyan<sup>8</sup>; but this was a sort of pure dance representing the forceful *Tāṇḍava*

<sup>1</sup> As pointed out by N. V. Krishna Warriar, *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, dated 21 February 1960, p. 7 ff.

<sup>2</sup> TSS No. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Edited by P. Anujan Achan, Trichur, 1925.

<sup>4</sup> 'Rājasiṃhaḥ praśāstu naḥ' in the *Bharatavākya*.

<sup>5</sup> TSS.

<sup>6</sup> r. K. Kunjunni Raja, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Many scholars in Kerala consider this as a reference to *Kuṭiyāttam* in its earlier form.



dance of Śiva and the graceful *Lalita* dance of Pārvatī, and has nothing to do with the staging of Sanskrit plays. *Kūttā* is a Dravidian term meaning 'dance' or 'drama', and *Cākkaiyan* means a 'dancer' or 'actor'.<sup>1</sup>

Reference to *Āriyamkūttu* as distinct from *Tamilkkūttu* is found in Tamil literature. But we do not have clear ideas about the exact nature of some of the types of these described in the Tamil works and commentaries. It is, however, certain that some sort of staging of Sanskrit plays was in existence in South India.<sup>2</sup> *Cākkaiyārs* and *Naṅgaiyārs* are also mentioned in ancient Tamil literature and inscriptions. Kerala tradition says that till the nineteenth century, *Kūttā* of the Kerala type was performed in Tiruchendur temple in Tamilnāḍ.<sup>3</sup>

In Kerala besides the tradition handed down from generation to generation regarding the staging of Sanskrit plays, there are actual texts dealing with the various aspects of the stagecraft. The most important among them are the *Kramadīpikās* and the *Āṭṭaparakāras*<sup>4</sup>; the former, written either in Sanskrit or in Malayalam or in both, explain the procedure to be adopted in the staging of plays and deal with the songs, dances, the *Rāgas* and the various stage directions. Some texts give the name as *Kriyākrama*. The latter indicate the way of acting the meanings of the verses, etc. in detail, in the form of a continuous moving story to enable the actor to represent it by gestures and movements. This is mostly written in simple Malayalam and is not to be spoken on the stage, but is only intended for the actors. Besides these, there are texts in Malayalam to be spoken by the *Vidūṣaka*, explaining the meanings of the Sanskrit texts spoken by the hero and extraneous matter added for producing humour as well as the Malayalam parody of the verses spoken by the hero.

<sup>1</sup> The derivation of the term is not clear; some explain it on the basis of *Śākya* or Buddhist, but it is not certain, cf., Ammaman Thampuran, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> N. V. Krishna Warriar, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* Also M. Raghava Iyengar, *Some Aspects of Kerala and Tamil Literature*, Pt. II, p. 37 f.

<sup>4</sup> Trivandrum Palace Library, No. 1521; Trivandrum Curator's Office Library, Nos. 1309-1312; BORI, Poona, Nāṭaka MSS. Nos. 132, 133, etc. MSS. are also with many Cākyār families and with K. P. Narayana Pisharoti, *Aśokavanikāṅka* has been published from Trivandrum, TMS 95.



Then there is *Nambyāruṭe Tamil*<sup>1</sup> in long sentences summarizing the story of the scene to be enacted ; this was to be recited by the Nambyār at the beginning of the play ; hence the name. The Sanskrit work called *Naṭāṅkuśa* criticising the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* for taking liberties with the texts and for adding extraneous matter is also useful in understanding the various elements of the stage practice in Kerala.

There are two types of *Kūṭṭa* in Kerala. The *Prabandham Kūṭṭa*, popularly known as *Kūṭṭa*, is concerned with the exposition of Purāṇic stories by the actor in the rôle of the Vidūṣaka. The other is the actual staging of Sanskrit plays called *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. *Naṇṇiyār Kūṭṭa* is not a distinct type ; it is mono-acting by a Naṇṇiyār representing, through gestures alone, the story of Kṛṣṇa, and is part of the *Nirvahaṇa* of the Ceṭī in the Praveśaka scene of *Subhadrādhanañjaya*, Act II.

#### PLAYS STAGED

The Sanskrit dramas used on the traditional Kerala stage are the following<sup>2</sup> :

(1) *Subhadrādhanañjaya*, (2) *Tapatīsaṁvaraṇa*, (3) *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi*, (4) *Nāgānanda*, (5) *Pratijñāyauḡandharāyaṇa*, (6) *Svapnavāsavadatta*, (7) *Pratimānāṭaka*, (8) *Abhiṣekanāṭaka*, (9) *Mattavilāsa*, (10) *Bhagavadajjukīya*, (11) *Dūtaghaṭotkaca*, (12) *Kalyāṇasaugandhika* (13) *Bālacarita*.

Only single acts from these were selected at a time, and each act was known by a separate name<sup>3</sup>, such as *Mantrāṅka* (*Pratijñāyauḡandharāyaṇa*, Act III), *Aṅgulīyāṅka* (*Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi*) and *Svapnāṅka* (*Svapnavāsavadatta*, Act IV). According to some traditions, the *Śākuntala* and the *Mahānāṭaka* were also staged by the Cākyārs. Ideas from Kālidāsa are frequently inserted in appropriate places in the stage-manuals. The *Pratimā*, *Cūḍāmaṇi* and *Abhiṣeka* together covered the whole of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story and contain twenty acts. There are manuals called *Kramadīpikās* describing the staging of these. The *Bālacarita* is usually selected for

<sup>1</sup> Madras, R. 3003.

<sup>2</sup> K. R. Pisharoti (*op. cit*) adds *Unmādavāsavadatta* to the list ; but that work is a *kāvya* according to *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi*.

<sup>3</sup> References to single Acts are found elsewhere also. See *Nāṭakalakṣaṇaratnakōśa* of Sāgaranandin.



the *début* or *Araṇṇettam* of the Cākyār boys. *Mattavilāsa* is staged in certain temples as a religious ceremony. The *Kalyāṇasaugandhika* is by one Nīlakaṇṭha, who is believed to have been a member of the Cākyār community.

## ACTORS

The art of staging the Sanskrit plays in Kerala has been handed down from generation to generation as an exclusive hereditary profession by the Cākyārs and the Nambyārs. The real actors are the Cākyārs, and the women of the Nambyār community called Naṇyārs. The Nambyār plays on the big drum called *Mizhāva* with his bare hands; hence he is called *Pāṇivāda*. It may be noted that the famous 19th century poet of Kerala, Rāmapāṇivāda, was a member of this community.<sup>1</sup> The Nambyār also narrates in the local Malayalam language the introductory stories; texts used for such explanations, called *Mārdaṅgika Tamil* are referred to in the fifteenth century work *Līlātilaka*, as belonging to the pure language different from the *Maṇipravāla*. The Naṇyār's duty is not only to play the rôle of the female characters in the play wherever required, but also to sing songs and to use the cymbals to keep the *Tāla*.

According to traditions there were 18 Cākyār families, but now there are only six. They are : 1. Ammannūr, 2. Kiṭaṇṇūr, 3. Kaippa (Paiṅkulam), 4. Māṇiyūr, 5. Kuttaṇceri, and 6. Potiyil. Ammannūr family was formerly near Pattambi, but now it is at Iriṇṇālakkuda. Parameśvara Cākyār, well-known as Cāccu Cākyār, of this family (born in A.D. 1880) is one of the most famous actors now living, and is being given a pension of Rs. 40 by the Kerala Sangita Nataka Akademi. Among other well-known actors at present are Mādhava Cākyār of the same family, Rāma Cākyār of Paiṅkulam, and Mādhava Cākyār of Potiyil family. There are many popular anecdotes about the sense of humour and the presence of mind as well as the power of acting of the Cākyārs in ancient times.<sup>2</sup>

There have been several scholars among the Cākyārs. Dāmodara of Māṇṇānam who lived in the fourteenth century A.D.

<sup>1</sup> For details see Kunjunni Raja, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Ammaman Thampuran, *op. cit.*

wrote a Sanskrit Mahākāvya called *Śivavilāsa*<sup>1</sup> and a Malayalam Campū work called *Uṇṇiyāṭicaritam*.<sup>2</sup> The Campū contains a very interesting description of Dāmodara Cākyār himself. Ravi Cākyār of Kuṭṭaṇceri<sup>3</sup> family was a friend of Melpputtūr Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa; he is the author of a poem *Cāṇakyakathāsāra* which is based on a prose version of the story of Cāṇakya. Melpputtūr is said to have composed many of the Prabandhas as texts for the Cākyār in the exposition of Purāṇic stories. In the *Niranunāsika*, Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa says that it was composed at the request of Ravinartaka.<sup>4</sup> Tradition says that Nīlakaṇṭha, author of the *Kalyāṇasaugandhika*, was a member of the Cākyār community.

The rôle of the heroine in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* is taken by Naṇyārs, the women of the Nambyār community. The women of the Cākyār community are called 'Illottamma'; they have nothing to do with the stage.<sup>5</sup> There are several references in literature about the Naṇyārs as great dance experts. They seem to have been associated with some of the temples also. In the 14th century Malayalam poem *Uṇṇunīlisandēśa* there is a reference to a Naṇyār in the rôle of Tapatī, the heroine of the *Tapatī-saṁvaraṇa*<sup>6</sup> :

*kaṇṭomallo taliyil iruvaṁkūttu nām annorikkal  
taivam keṭṭālorū tapatīyār naṇṇayār enne nokki |  
anyāsaṅgāl kim api kaluṣā prākṛtamkoṇṭavādil  
pinnekkkaṇṭilaṇaya vivaśam vīrttu maṇṭinra ninne ॥*

In some of the verses used by the Vidūṣaka which deal with prostitutes there are references to Cākyār and *Kūttā*. Reference to the poor decrepit Cākyār and his associates is found in one of the *Puruṣārtha* verses recited by the Vidūṣaka<sup>7</sup> :

*noṇṇaṇṇam pazhamāla māntoli marappūlennite bhūṣaṇam  
maṇṇaccinni ciraṭṭa cāṇa politol tālam kuṭakkālmurī |*

<sup>1</sup> TSS.

<sup>2</sup> Published from Trivandrum.

<sup>3</sup> Kunjunni Raja, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ravinaṭeśvarādeśāt*

<sup>5</sup> K. R. Pisharoti has wrongly referred to Naṇyārs as the women of Cākyār community.

<sup>6</sup> II. 94.

<sup>7</sup> K. Narayana Pisharoti, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, p. 19.



*Ellām keṭṭiyēṭukkumā mutunaṭan tan nambiyār naṇṇayār*  
*It yetais saha dīnavṛttir iha ponnāyāti śailūṣakaḥ ॥*

#### PLACE

The Sanskrit plays were staged by the Cākyārs only in the vicinity of temples. It was developed exclusively as a temple-art. It may be noted that the prologues of many of the Classical Sanskrit dramas say explicitly that the plays were to be produced to gathering of people during festivals in temples; but the plays were not exclusively confined to the temples. In Kerala it is kept strictly a temple-art even to this day. The *Uṇṇunīlisandēśa* refers to the staging of the *Tapatīsaṁvaraṇa* at the Tali temple; the Malayalam *Kokasandēśa* refers to the *Kūttā* in the Maṇḍapa of the temple Tṛprayār.<sup>1</sup> Some of the big temples like those at Trichur, Perumanam and Irinṇālakkuda have theatres, called 'Kūttampalam' inside. It is the oblong *Vikṛṣṭa* type of medium size theatre that is found in Kerala temples. Where there is no Kūttampalam, the staging may take place in the big halls of the temple, like the 'Valiyampalam' (hall on either side in front of the *sanctum sanctorum*). It is only in the Tṛprayār temple that the Naṇṇayār performs her *Kūttā* in the Maṇḍapa in front of the *sanctum sanctorum*. There are places called 'Kūttuparambā' in different parts of Kerala; according to some people, these are places where Sanskrit plays were once enacted. According to tradition the scene from the *Nāgānanda*, depicting the introduction of Garuḍa, was staged outside the temple; but the god's image was to be brought from the temple and kept near the stage even there.

#### THE STAGE AND ITS DECORATION

On one side the green-room, just in front of it is the stage, and the rest of the place for the audience—this is the general arrangement in the theatres. At the back of the stage are kept, inside a wooden frame, two big drums called *Mizhāvā*, big pots about three feet high made of copper, with the mouth covered tightly with leather. The Nambyār plays on them with his hands. There is a high seat for the Nambyār to sit while playing on the drum. At the back of the stage are two doors, one on either side, connecting the stage with the green-room.

<sup>1</sup> National Book Stall, Kottayam.

The decoration of the stage, *Raṅgaprasādhana*, is done with tender leaves of coconut palms, bunches of tender coconuts, plantain trees with fruits, red silk, the cylindrical measuring vessel called *Para* filled with rice, etc. The pillars are decorated by covering them with silk. There will be one stool on the stage for the actor to sit when necessary. Before the first entrance of the important characters, a curtain is held in front by two people. A huge lamp about four feet high made of bell-metal is placed in front of the stage, lighted with oil and wicks, two wicks facing the actor and one facing the audience.

#### INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

There are five main items in the instrumental orchestra for the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. They are referred to as *Pañcavādya*. Besides the *Mizhāv* drums, there is the cymbal (*Kuzhittāla*), played by the *Naṇyār* sitting on a cloth placed to the right of the right *Mizhāv*. She also gives the vocal music. Then there is the small, but delicate and sensitive drum called *Iḍakka*, played with a small stick by an artist standing near the left *Mizhāv*. The other two instruments are the wind instruments, *Kompā* (trumpet) and *Kuzhal* (pipe). They are also played by men standing near the left *Mizhāv*. The blowing of the conch-shell, *Śaṅkha*, is also added at times.

#### PRELIMINARIES

The *Nāṭyaśāstra* prescribes an elaborate series of preliminaries, called *Pūrvaraṅga*, which must be performed before the actual drama begins.<sup>1</sup> This must be the basis for the preliminary rites performed by the actors on the Kerala stage. The following are the main items of the preliminary rites performed for *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* :

The big lamp made of bell-metal is lighted with oil and wicks, two wicks facing the actor and one facing the audience. *Aṣṭamaṅgalya* (eight auspicious things)<sup>2</sup> is also placed nearby. The *Mizhāv* drum is tuned; the *Nambyār* plays on it accompanied by the cymbal; and songs are sung vocally by the *Naṇyār*,

<sup>1</sup> V. Raghavan, 'Music in Ancient Indian Drama', *Arts and Letters*, Vol. XXVIII, part I; Journal of the Madras Music Academy.

<sup>2</sup> The eight things consist of gold, mirror, saffron, rice, fruit, etc.



invoking the deities Gaṇapati, Sarasvatī and Śiva. The songs are called *Akkitta* songs and the playing on the *Mizhāvā* is called *Akkitta Kottuka*. Some texts call it the playing of the *goṣṭhī*.

*Akkitta* songs invoking Gaṇapati, Sarasvatī and Śiva<sup>1</sup> :

- 1 अगणितफणिफणमणिगणकिरणैरुणित निजतनुमविरतफलदम् ।  
कटतटगल्लुठदलिकुलनिनदं प्रणमत गणपतिमगणितफलदम् ॥
- 2 अगणितगुणगणमशरणशरणं बहुमतफलततिवितरणनिपुणम् ।  
अवनतमुनिजननतशतमुदितं प्रणमत गणपतिमगणितफलदम् ॥
- 3 स्फुटपटुपृथुतटकटतटविगलत्परिमलमदजलमसृणितहरितम् ।  
सुरवरकरिवरसुरुचिरवदनं प्रणमत गणपतिमगणितफलदम् ॥
- 4 मधुकरमुखरितकटतटविकटं मदजलमलिनितकरतलकमलम् ।  
पदसरसीरुहनतदितितनयं प्रणमत गणपतिमगणितफलदम् ॥
- 5 सुन्दरमेरुगिरिप्रतिमं वन्दितसुन्दरगणमनिशम् ।  
कुन्ददलामलदन्तधरं वन्दे देवं गजवदनम् ॥
- 6 वेलाविचलितनागयुतं लीलापङ्कजलोलदृशम् ।  
मालेयाचलसदृशतनुं वन्दे देवं गजवदनम् ॥
- 7 त्रिभुवनवन्दितपदकमलं त्रिदशमुनीश्वरनुतचरितम् ।  
त्रिनयनमङ्कुशपाशधरं वन्दे देवं गजवदनम् ॥
- 8 उद्धूतामररिपुनिकरं राजीवोदितसदृशतनुम् ।  
सौवर्णाम्बुजपीतपटं वन्दे देवं गजवदनम् ॥
- 9 अम्बिकया परिरम्भितगात्रं लम्बसदुल्लसितोदरबिम्बम् ।  
अम्बुजपत्रपवित्रितनेत्रं शङ्करसूनुमुपैमि गणेशम् ॥
- 10 अङ्कुशपाशवराभयहस्तं कुङ्कुमचन्दनचचितगात्रम् ।  
पङ्कजपत्रपवित्रितनेत्रं शङ्करसूनुमुपैमि गणेशम् ॥
- 11 अच्छस्फटिकसमानच्छायां चन्द्रकलाङ्कितकेशकलापम् ।  
व्यासविरिञ्चाद्यखिलगणेश्यां वन्दे वाणीमभयदवरदाम् ॥
- 12 गौरीभर्तुर्नर्तनकाले रङ्गीभूतो धर्मवृषोऽयम् ।  
धर्मैर्वृषभं धर्मात्मानं प्रणमत नित्यं निर्मलदेवम् ॥
- 13 अर्थसरोरुहमध्यनिषण्णाम् अन्तरजोमयपुस्तकहस्ताम् ।  
पुस्तनिरस्तसमस्तरलाक्षीं वस्तुधियं प्रणमे हृदि वाणीम् ॥

<sup>1</sup> Ammaman Thampuran, *op. cit.*

१५ अर्धशशाङ्कधराय नमो दिव्यगजेन्द्रमुखाय नमः ।

नागकृताभरणाय नमो देव उमासहिताय नमः ॥

The next item is *Nambyārute Tamil*. The *Nambyār* gives a summary of the story to be enacted. This is in pure Malayalam, with plenty of loan-words from Sanskrit used with Malayalam suffixes. Such texts, called *Mārdāṅgika Tamil*, are referred to in the fifteenth century work *Lilātilaka*<sup>1</sup>; but now only few texts are available. An example may be given from the *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi*.

“*Hariḥ, Arulicceytān amṛtakiraṇaśekharapriyatanayan adbhutānubhāvan añjanānandanān mārutātmajan śrīhanumān..... lāṅgūlāgni koṇṭu laṅkādhāham ceytu, vibhīṣaṇanuṭe arcanāgṛhavam sītayirikkunna udyānavum ventillayennariñṇu, samudrattileccāṭi tī keṭutti, samudrattinuṭe marukaraye prāpiccu, brahmaputran ākina jāmbavāne praṇamanam ceytu, vṛttāntanivedanamkoṇṭu santuṣṭahṛdayanmārākina vanaranmāroṭūm kūṭi, mānavendrasamīpam nokki ezhnnarulinān mārutātmajan śrī hanumān.*”

Next is the *Araṇṇu Tali*, or cleaning the stage by sprinkling water. The *Nambyār* leaves the drum after the *Akkitta*, brings sacred water from the green-room in a vessel, and standing in front of the drum and facing the audience, sprinkles the water and recites the *Maṅgalaśloka*, which introduces the story. This is not the *Nāndī* verse of the drama, but special verses composed for the purpose by *Cākyārs* in ancient times. Thus in the *Subhadrādhanañjaya*, Act I, the verse is :

कृत्वा प्रदक्षिणमशेषवसुन्धरायाः तीर्थविगाहपरिशुद्धमतिः प्रभासे ।

श्रुत्वा मुकुन्दसहजामुदिताभिलाषः पायात् स वः पृथुलकीर्तिभुजः किरीटी ॥

The second Act of *Nāgānanda* is introduced thus :

अमलगुणविभूषां सिद्धराजेन्द्रपुत्रीमचलवरतनूजामन्दिरात् साधुदृष्टाम् ।

मनसिजपरिपाकेनालिखन्निन्दुकान्ते बुधजननयनेन्दुः पातु विद्याधरेन्द्रः ॥

These verses are called *Ālāma* or *Ālāmaśloka*. The exact significance of the term is not clear. The *Ālāmaśloka* for the *Mantrāṅka* is given thus<sup>2</sup> :

<sup>1</sup> *Lilātilakam*, Chapter I.

<sup>2</sup> Trivandrum Curator's Office Library, No. 1310.



*diṇḍī daṇḍam dadhāno bhasitasitatanur bhasmaklptatripundro  
bhāsvathakaupīnavāsā praviśati gaṇayan māṣakān dakṣiṇānām |  
mantrārtham vahniśālām pratikṛtasamayas satsakhībhyām  
ubhābhyām*

*no paśyāmīti jalpan jala iva matimān modakam devapīṭhe ॥*

This is followed by *Dhruvā* verses sung by the Naṇyār about the entrance of the character.

*varaḍiṇḍikaveṣavibhūṣaṇavān  
urudaṇḍadharo bhasitācchatanuḥ |  
mṛdubhasmakapundrakamaṇḍanavān  
viśatīha Vasantaka eṣa kṛtī ॥*

These verses indicate the story of the earlier life of the character. The last line in all the verses is the same: *viśatīha Vasantaka eṣa kṛtī*. These are therefore similar to the entrance *Dhruvā* of the Śanskrit dramas prescribed in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

The following is the *Ālāmaśloka* of the Vidūṣaka, Śaṇḍilya, in the *Bhagavadajjukīya*<sup>1</sup>; this is to be recited in Kaiśikī Rāgā:

विद्याविद्योत्तमानः शमदमनिलयो दण्डकुण्ड्यासनोरु-  
त्राण्यच्छामयोऽयं दधदजिनकुशग्रन्थिकापुस्तकानि ।  
शाण्डिल्यो हास्यभाषाकृतिरुदितशिखापञ्चको वञ्चितात्मा  
योगीन्द्रं धर्मतोऽनुव्रजति जड इवालक्ष्यविकृष्टचेष्टः ॥

The *Dhruvā* verses, also called *Akkitta*, on the introduction of Śaṇḍilya are given below. This is also to be sung in Kaiśikī Rāga. The last verse is in Prakrit. All these verses are additional ones not found in the text<sup>2</sup>:

आत्माराममपास्तसमस्तं संन्यासिनमनुयात्यमलात्मा ।  
वेदान्तार्थनिवेशितबुद्धिः शाण्डिल्योऽसौ जड इव मतिमान् ।  
जडवत्कृतवेषाचरितैरतिगृहितनिर्मलवस्तुगतिः ।  
निगमान्तसरोरुहसन्मधुपो वरशिष्य उपैति यतिप्रवरम् ॥  
प्रथमाश्रमसंश्रयनित्यरतिः प्रथमो विदुषां विषयेषु जडः ।  
क्षपिताखिलसंसृतिदुःखभरो वरशिष्य उपैति यतिप्रवरम् ॥  
धृतपञ्चशिखः शिखिकल्पगुणो गुणभारभरो निरवद्यमतिः ।  
सकलागमसारमुधारसिको वरशिष्य उपैति यतिप्रवरम् ॥

<sup>1</sup> MS. with K. P. Narayana Pisharoti.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

दिष्ट्या विप्रकुले जनित...कृतप्रचयादहमित्यधिकम् ।  
 परितुष्टमनाः परितापहरं वरशिष्य उपैति यतिप्रवरम् ॥  
 अतघे हि कुले मम जन्म सतामनघद्विजदैवतशिष्टभुजाम् ।  
 अनिशागमपारकठोरगुरो म...नाभिरते महनीयतमे ॥  
 अशनाकुलनादहमात्मगृहे परिवर्धितमोक्षमहाभिरुचिः ।  
 दशमिश्रबलाशयसंश्रयणादनिशं तमपोह्य गतः समयम् ॥  
 परिणामविदारुणया वरया च विपत्तिपथानुगया ।  
 परिचिन्त्य धिया धृतशिष्यगुणः समुपैम्यहमद्य यतिप्रवरम् ॥  
 परिचलदीणचारुमहुषिगविलो अणो गिरितटकन्दरासु परिलंघनसोहिओ ।  
 तरुविडवन्तरासु वणचैकमणो हिओ विअरइ वाणरो कुटिलखेलविडंबगई ॥

The following is to be sung in four sections, each in a different *svara* :

भवदुःखमहाजलधौ पतितं शरणं समुपैमि भवन्तमहम् ।  
 अपरा मम नास्ति गतिर्भगवन् भगतश्चरणाम्बुरुहेण विना ॥  
 भगवन्नुदधौ मृतिजन्मजले सुखदुःखभूषे पतितं व्यथितम् ।  
 कृपया शरणागतमुद्धर मामनुशाध्युपपन्नमनन्यगतिम् ॥

The *Ālāmaśloka* for the *Āṅgulīyāṅka* is the following :

रामङ्गुलीयकधरो रघुवीरदूतो रागान्धरावणकुलक्षयधूमकेतुः ।  
 रोषाभिभूतनिखिलारिबलो हनूमान् रक्षां तनोतु सततं पवनात्मजो वः ॥

A curtain is held by two persons standing in front of the stage. The first entrance of the main character is to take place. The actor comes and stands behind the curtain. The orchestra of *Pañcavādya* is played. For this both the *Mizhāvā* drums will be used. The actor makes his appearance gradually, by lowering the curtain; and then the curtain is completely removed. Now the actor, dressed as the hero of the scene, is on the stage; his mental attitude is indicated by *Sāttvikābhinaya*. Then he recites a portion of his speech.

This is followed by various steps and movements to the accompaniment of songs sung by the *Naṇyār*. Though it is the actor, dressed as the hero, who performs the dance movements, this part seems to be the *Sūtradhāra*'s function. This portion of the Preliminaries is called *Kriya Caviṭṭuka*. The instructions given in the stage-manuals are full of technical terms, and references



to the beginnings of verses (*Pratīkas*), and are written in a *Sūtra*-like style and are consequently very difficult to understand for an outsider. But the similarity to the instructions in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is clear.

There are two *Cārī* movements, one normal and the other ludicrous (*hāsyā*); the playing on the drums, various movements or *Parikramas*, and different steps like *Cerīya Cokka*, *Valīya Cokka*, *Yāśi Yāśi* and *Pullarikka* are also mentioned in the manuals.<sup>1</sup> The exact significance of these steps, or the terms, needs further study. Different gaits like *Colliyunti Naṭa*, *Marutattil Naṭa* are also referred to. One chapter in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* describes the various gaits to be adopted by the actors to suit the context, but such names are not given there. They are described in terms of the various *Cārīs* and the tempos. The *Naṭyār* sings invocatory verses during this *Maṅgalakriyā*; these are also called *Akkitta*. *Akkitta* for the *kriyā*<sup>2</sup> :

विश्वजनाधिप वासव जय जय ।  
 विश्वामरमुख वह्ने जय जय ।  
 सर्वप्रेताधिपते भगवन् जय जय ।  
 रक्षोधिपते निर्ऋते जय जय ।  
 पश्चिमदेशाधिपते भगवन् जय जय ।  
 विश्वचराचर वायो जय जय ।  
 वित्ताधिपते भगवन् जय जय ।  
 भक्तदयापर शंभो जय जय ।  
 ब्रह्म पितामह धातर्जय जय ।  
 देवगणाश्रय विष्णो जय जय ॥

The *Naṭāṅkuśa* says about these preliminary rites<sup>3</sup> :

क्रियायाः आदौ चारीपरिग्रहः क्रियते । चारीति ताललयानुवर्ती कश्चिन्नृत्त-  
 विशेषः । तामादाय मूर्च्छने विक्षेपेण समाप्य हास्यद्वितीयचारः समादीयते ।  
 ततः कोणनृत्तं, पार्श्वनृत्तं च परिगृह्य विशिष्टरञ्जनेन जाति...विक्षेपः ।  
 पुनः...सकलसुरासुरं पश्चाद् याशियाशि इत्यादि । एवमन्यत्रापि तदनन्तरमेतत्  
 एतदनन्तरमिदं इत्यस्ति क्रियाक्रमः ।

<sup>1</sup> *Kūṭiyāṭṭakramam*, Paliyam MS. (copy with the author).

<sup>2</sup> Ammaman Thampuran, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> Madras MS, R. 3003.

Terms like *Sakalasurāsura* and *Sphaṭikamaṇi* refer to the Dhruvā verses. Thus the full verse for the latter is<sup>1</sup> :

स्फटिकमणिधवलहिमपटलकुमुदवनसदृशो वपुषा ।

उदयगिरिशिखर एष उदयति पूर्णो रजनिकरः ॥

The first day's action is over with these *Kriyās*. Some sort of such steps and movements are used even on other days.

Here is one instruction for the *Purappāḍa* in the *Aṅgulīyāṅka* of the *Aścaryacūḍāmaṇi*<sup>2</sup> :

“For *Aṅgulīyāṅkam Purappāḍa*, light the lamp, place the *Aṣṭamaṅgalya* ; tune the drum *Mizhāvā*, then play the *goṣṭhī*, perform the *Araṇṇu Tali*, hold the curtain, read the text, walk a few steps, perform the *Ambarayāna*, make *Kiṭinta* steps, make various foot-movements after *Kalakalavādyā* and go to the green-room, sprinkle water on the face, go back to the stage by second *Cārī*, read the verse part by part, bow to the flowers, have various movements like *Yāśi Yāśi*, *Pullarikka*, *Matametuka* and *Parikrama*, and then show the *Keśādipāda* of the heroine.”

It may be noted that the actual *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* or combined dance action takes place only on the last three nights ; all the rest are *Kūttā* or mono-act, introducing the story and the characters fully.

#### NIRVAHANA

The preliminary rites and the first introduction of the main character are over on the first day. Then from the second day onwards begins the *Nirvahaṇa* of the hero. It is the description of the earlier life of the hero prior to the incidents to be actually staged. This will continue for a few days. If the portion selected is one of the later Acts of a play, the *Nirvahaṇa* has to include all the incidents described in the earlier Acts also. There are two ways of describing the story : *Anukrama*, describing the incidents backwards one by one ; and *Samkṣepa* where the story is described from the beginning in a forward direction. This will contain detailed descriptions of various scenes. The *Cākyārs*

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Ullur, *History of Kerala Literature*, Vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> Free translation from Malayalam.



have in their collection several verses summarizing the earlier story, on the basis of which the *Āṅgikābhinaya* is performed. At the end of acting a verse, the Naṇyār recites the relevant verse.

Next is the first introduction of the Vidūṣaka, with the first words he has to say in the Act selected. This is followed by the *Puruṣārtha* discussion which takes four days to finish. Then the actual *Nirvahaṇa* of the Vidūṣaka begins. Through *Vācikābhinaya* he describes all the incidents of the previous scenes. He gives not only his own words, but also the words of the hero and others and explains them. In fact this portion may be considered as a mono-act by the Vidūṣaka. The hero in his *Nirvahaṇa* would have given prominence to those scenes where there is scope for *Āṅgikābhinaya*; the Vidūṣaka gives prominence to the incidents where the scope is for *Vācikābhinaya*.

The actual *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, or combined action in the staging, takes place only on the last three nights. The earlier portions could be expanded or reduced according to circumstances. One manuscript of the *Kramadīpikā* of the *Bhagavadajjukīya* describes the procedure for acting it in 35 days. In the case of ordinary Acts, eleven days will be the minimum required. In the *Bhagavadajjukīya* more than a week is devoted to the Vidūṣaka to explain, discuss and refute the philosophical tenets of the Cārvākas and the Buddhists.

MUTIYAKKITA OR THE FINAL INVOCATION :

क्षीरसागरफेनचन्दनहारजालपयोधरां  
मारवैरिमुखारविन्दविकासजालरविप्रभाम् ।  
नारदादिमुनीन्द्रवृन्दनुतिप्रियामचलात्मजां  
वीरभद्रमनोरमां शिरसा नमामि शिवंकराम् ॥ १ ॥

पङ्कजाक्षसरोरुहासनदुनिरीक्षिततेजसं  
अङ्कलालितपार्वतीकुचकुङ्कुमारुणवक्षसम् ।  
शङ्करं निजभक्तदत्तसमस्तलोकमनामयं  
देवदेवमुमापतिं शिरसा नमामि शिवंकरम् ॥ २ ॥

कुन्दनिर्मलमन्दहासविकासजालरविप्रभा-  
मिन्दुबिम्बनिभाननामरविन्दचारुविलोचनाम् ।  
चन्दनागरुपङ्करूपिततुङ्गपीनपयोधरां  
चन्द्रशेखरवत्लभां प्रणमामि शैलसुतामुमाम् । ३ ॥

निर्मलय निरामयाय निरूपणाधिकमूर्तये  
 निर्मलस्तुतिसंहराखिललोकविस्मयकारिणे ।  
 नर्मदाय गजाजिनाय वसुन्धराधरकन्यका-  
 नन्दिताय नमश्शिवाय सदाशिवाय शिवात्मने ॥ ४ ॥  
 अम्बिके गिरिजे शिवे शशिविम्बसौम्यनिभानने  
 पुण्डरीकदलायताक्षि विलोलकुन्तलमण्डिते ।  
 सुम्भसूदिनि चण्डिके करवालखण्डितदानवे  
 शंखचक्रगदाङ्किते मुरवैरिसोदरि पाहि माम् ॥ ५ ॥  
 अद्रिमविद्रुम(?)ललितपदं रुद्रं भीमं भूतपतिम्  
 अद्रिपतेस्तनयारमणं वन्दे शम्भुं परमशिवम् ॥ ६ ॥  
 मारशरीरविनाशकरं नागसहस्रजटामकुटम् ।  
 भूतगणेशमुमारमणं वन्दे शंभुं ...॥ ७ ॥  
 कोकसमेन्दुसमानतनुं वृन्दारार्चितपदकमलम् ।  
 गङ्गाचुम्बितपिच्छजटं वन्दे शंभुं ...॥ ८ ॥  
 डिण्डिमडमरुकवाद्यरवं तुम्बुरुनारदगीतरवम् ।  
 भस्मविलेपनपरशुधरं वन्दे शंभुं ...॥ ९ ॥

This is sung by the Nañyār at the end, when the staging of the whole act is over, and all characters except the hero make their exit. The Nambyār will play on the drum, the *Muṭiyakkitta*, or the final invocation. The Cākyār, in the rôle of the hero, makes a kind of dance with various steps. Afterwards he washes his feet, takes a wick and after lighting it, extinguishes the lamp and again lights one wick in it. With this the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* comes to an end.

#### ANGIKABHINAYA

*Āṅgikābhinaya*, or the representation of ideas through various gestures, occupies an important place in *Kūṭṭa* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. It is not only the word-meanings, but also the suggested ideas and the detailed explanation of the ideas, that are represented through gestures. The hand-poses and the various gestures used for the *Āṅgikābhinaya* are based mainly on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*; but there are slight differences in certain cases. There is a short anonymous manual on hand-poses, called the *Hastalakṣaṇadīpikā* which was used by the Cākyārs; this text was later adopted for the Kathakali too, and now it is generally considered as the basic text for the Kathakali.



While staging Sanskrit plays in ancient Indian theatre, not only the sentence meaning, but even the individual word-meanings were represented through gestures. This is clear from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and other works on dancing. Śārṅgadeva says in the *Saṅgītaratnākara* that *Nāṭya*, consisting of indications through gestures of the sentence-meanings and the individual word-meanings of the texts in a drama, and thus suggesting the sentiments and moods, is employed in the staging of dramas.

नाटकस्थितवाक्यार्थपदार्थाभिनयात्मकम् ।

तदाद्यभरतेनोक्तं रसभावसमन्वितम् ।

नाट्यं तन्नाटकेष्वेवोपयुक्तं...<sup>1</sup>

Kallinātha says in the commentary on the same work that according to some scholars, not only the stems, but also the suffixes should be indicated through gestures. He says that he is not explaining them, since Bharata has not dealt with them and since the suffix-meanings could be got from the context through suggestion. But command, negation, etc. should be indicated. He gives a detailed description of the *Abhinaya* of the Nāṇḍī verse of the *Vikramorvaśīya*, more detailed than what is found in the present day *Bharatanāṭya*. (Thus for *Vedāntesū* he gives the gestures for both *Vedas* and *Anta*).

The Kerala tradition is very elaborate. Each word is uttered slowly, and the gestures are shown both for the stem and for the suffix; there are special gestures to indicate the number and gender, as well as the tense and the mood. In *Kūttā* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* the actor has to confine himself to the space between the shoulders, unlike in the Kathakali, where the actor can stretch his arms to any length desired for showing the gestures. The *Āṅgikābhinaya* method adopted by the Cākyars may be illustrated by taking a particular example.

In the first Act of the *Subhadrādhanañjaya* Arjuna saves the heroine without knowing her identity; then looking at her beauty he says to himself :

चलकुवलयधाम्नोरञ्जनस्तिग्धमक्ष्णोः

भयचलधृति युग्मं केयमालोलयन्ती ।

<sup>1</sup> Chapter VII, verse 33.

मुखपरिमललोभाद् भृङ्गदत्तानुयात्रा  
शिथिलयति सुभद्रामुद्रितं मानसं मे ॥

The actor taking the rôle of Arjuna devotes nearly two hours to explain this verse through gestures. First he looks at her beauty and begins to describe her from head to foot beginning with the hair. When he comes to the eyes he stops; and recites this verse very slowly in the Rāga called *Ārttan*, indicating the meaning of each word through hand-gestures in the same order as in the text. Then the meanings are shown again by the gestures, but without reciting the verse. The number and gender of words, the nature of compounds, etc. are indicated. During the first recital there is no instrumental music; but during the second explanation the instruments are played. Then the verse is taken up for the third time for explaining the syntax (*Anvaya*); this is based on the principle of mutual expectancy or *Ākāṅkṣā*. First he recites the portion '*iyam kā*', and begins to indicate through gestures all its suggested meanings: "What sort of a girl is she? What is her name? Who is her father? Who is her mother? What is her family?" And so on. Then he hesitates: "Why should I worry about all these questions? Let her be anybody." Then he recites with gestures the portion '*me mānasam śithilayati*.' Then he begins to explain this passage in detail. Again the question arises: "What sort of a mind is it?" He himself answers it, reciting the portion: *Subhadrāmudritam*, 'sealed by Subhadrā.' Now the actor assumes the attitude of Subhadrā, and indicates through gestures how she enters his heart by his ears through the words of Gada describing her; in order that no one else may enter his mind, she uses the strings of her beauty, charm, etc. and ties up the mind tightly. Now this girl enters through the eyes and unties the strings, *śithilayati*. The next question that arises is this: "What sort of a girl is she?" The answer is: *akṣṇoḥ yugmam ālodayantī*, 'moving her two eyes.' "What kind of eyes?" The answer is, *navākuvalayadhāmnōḥ*, 'having the beauty of fresh lotus flowers'; again the eyes are *bhayacaladhṛti*, 'with the steadiness lost because of fright'. A third attribute of the eyes is *añjanasnigdham*, 'beautiful by the application of collyrium.'

To explain the significance of this one word the actor begins to stage a story. He assumes the attitude of the heroine, and calls her attendants, "Friends, come here, and decorate me". Then he



assumes the attitude of the attendants one by one, looks at the heroine and begins to decorate her. One unties her hair-knot, spreads the hair, makes it smooth with her hands, uses scented hair oil, and ties the hair into a knot, putting on a jasmin garland over it. The curls are kept in their proper place. Another places a *tilaka* mark on her forehead ; yet another puts on her ear a beautiful ear-ornament. Another paints her lips with red lac-dye ; yet another comes to her and places the ornaments round her neck. Similarly she is decorated with bangles, rings, anklets, etc. She is also helped to put on her dress beautifully. Every now and then the attendants make comments about the beauty of the heroine, and of the things used for decoration. When everything is over, one looks at her from head to foot, and shows that she is not fully satisfied. There is something wrong, some deficiency. She thinks about it for some time. Suddenly she understands it. She has forgotten to apply collyrium to her eyes. Immediately that is also done properly. She is perfect, for her eyes are now *añjanasnigdha*. The rôles of the heroine, her attendants, and Arjuna are taken here by the same actor. The Cākyārs are perfect in the art of mono-acting, and can very easily change the tone and attitude to suit the part they assume. The next attribute in the verses which describes the heroine is *mukhaparimalalobhād bhr̥ṅgadattānuyātrā*, 'with the bees following her, being attracted by the fragrance of her face'. When the whole idea of the verse is thus explained, the actor recites slowly the second half of the verse once more. Ideas from classical works could now and then be added in suitable contexts. The various *Āṭṭaparakāras* are intended to help the actors in explaining the passages clearly, indicating all the suggested meanings.

As another illustration we may note the directions given in the *Āṭṭaparakāra* manual for the staging of the following verse in *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi* :

आयातं मामपरिचितया वेलया मन्दिरं ते  
चोरो दण्डचस्त्वमिति मधुरं व्याहरन्त्या भवत्या ।  
मन्दे दीपे मधुलवमुचां मालया मल्लिकानां  
बद्धं चेतो दृढतरमिदं बाहुबन्धच्छलेन ॥

The direction given in the manual is in Malayalam; a free English translation of the same is given here :

“Hear this confidential words for identification. Once when we were in Ayodhyā, one day after sunset, I performed the *Sandhyāvandana*, and after dinner I went to my father’s bedroom. Then my father said, ‘Hallo dear boy, Rāma, come in, and sit on this bed.’ Then I approached him, touched the bed with my hand and placed the hand on my head (as a mark of respect); and sat there. I took my father’s feet, placed them on my lap and began to rub them to give him good sleep. He went to sleep. After some time he woke up, and said, ‘You have not gone. Rāma, go to sleep’. Then I placed his feet on the bed, again paid obeisance to the bed, and came to my bedroom. It was closed. I called Sītā. Sītā, on her part, in the evening, after sunset, had finished her dinner and gone to the bedroom with her attendants, who prepared the bed properly. They made a garland of jasmine flowers and gave it to her. Then Sītā said, ‘Dear friends, you may go. It is time for my husband to come.’ They left her. (Assuming Sītā’s rôle) ‘My husband has not yet come’; (getting angry) ‘He is a thief’. (Sits heaving a long sigh.) Then she heard her husband calling her. She opened the door, and stood bowing before him in *Kamalaparivarttana*. Then I went inside and sat on the bed and called Sītā, ‘Dear Sītā, come here’. Sītā did not come. I got up and took hold of her hand. She freed herself, and said, ‘Sir, do not touch me, You are a thief’. Then I said, ‘Then, tie my hands and arrest me’. Sītā took the jasmine garland and tied my hands together. Under the pretext of my hands she actually tied my heart. The only witness to this incident was the feeble light. No one else knows it. Tell this to Sītā.”

Some of the peculiarities in the *Āṅikābhinaya* of the texts in the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* such as expanding the text and explaining it, and adding of new ideas appropriate to the context, were already in existence, though not to such an extent, even in the staging of Sanskrit plays outside Kerala. The *Kuṭṭanīmata* description of the first Act of the *Ratnāvalī* makes this clear.<sup>1</sup> In the text the line,

<sup>1</sup> Ammaman Thampuran, *op. cit.*, p. 120 f.; *Kalāloka*m, p. 52 f.



व्यस्तः कम्पानुबन्धादनवरतमुरो हन्ति हारोऽयमस्यः ।

was to be represented in detail as :

करपीडनोपमर्दव्यतिकरसमये कदर्थ्यमानोऽपि ।

स्तनमण्डले स्थितोऽहं त्वं पुनराकृष्य कुत्रचित् क्षिप्तः ॥

अधुनान्तरयसि मामिति कोपादिव बारवाणमभिरामम् ।

बहुचित्रपदन्यासैर्वलग्न्या हन्ति हार उच्चलितः ॥

The next line of the same verse :

स्रस्तः स्रग्दामशोभां त्यजति विरचितामाकुलः केशपाशः ।

is expanded as follows :

चूतलता धम्मिल्लस्थानच्युतशेखरं दधौ श्लाघ्यम् ।

अघृत पतन् निव्यूहां नत्वैषा मदनिका वेणीम् ॥

After explaining the second half of the verse also, a new idea is added :

वहति स्म यं नितम्बं कथमपि कृच्छ्रेण मन्दसञ्चारा ।

कलयति तं तूललघुं जयति मनोजन्मनो महिमा ॥

*Āṅgikābhinaya* consists not only in explaining the meanings of the text, but also in indicating the nature of the character whose rôle is played by the actor. Thus in the *Bālivadhāṅka* of the *Abhiṣekanāṭaka* when Sugrīva enters, he has first of all to make various steps and gestures to indicate that he is a monkey. Catching hold of tree-branches and shaking them, taking out leaves from the branches, showing the teeth out, scratching the head and hips, taking the tail by the hand and smelling it and making a noise in imitation of the monkey are some of the pranks to indicate the nature of the monkey. It is only afterwards that the actor will show the attitude of Sugrīva, the king of monkeys.

Sugrīva calls Rāma by the word *Deva*. The term is derived from the root *div* which means 'to desire', 'to rejoice' and 'to have splendour.' All these different meanings are shown through gestures while addressing Rāma. "You have cut off all the seven Sāla trees with one arrow: to such a great man killing Bāli is only a *sport*." After showing this idea through gestures, he calls, '*Deva*'. Then he indicates another idea, "Having cut

off the seven Sālas you show a *desire* to defeat Bāli", and then again addresses him 'Deva.' Again the next idea, "There is nobody so *splendid* as you, enthusiastic in killing Bāli" is indicated, and Rāma is addressed, 'Deva'.

#### AHARYABHINAYA

Āhārya consists in the make-up and costumes suited to the characters. Broadly speaking, the Āhārya for the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* may be said to be similar to that of the Kathakali, but simpler. In *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, *Cutti* or the lining made with rice-flour paste round the cheek and the chin is narrower; the head-dress is also smaller. There is a slight difference in the use of costumes too. The ingredients used for the make-up are rice-powder, charcoal-powder, turmeric-powder, red arsenic (*manaśśila*), vermilion (*cāyilyam*), Indian blue, mica powder (*abhra*), the red Tecci flowers, Noṇṇaṇa grass, the thread of plantain stem, bamboo sticks, cork, the outer covering of the arecanut palm, etc. All these are cheap and are easily available in Kerala; all the same the decorations and costumes are artistically made so as to be remarkable. The face is painted, and *Cutti* is also made in certain cases; sandal paste, holy ash, collyrium, etc. are also used for these.

There are different types of make-up like *Pacca*, *Pazhukka*, *Kari* and *Katti*. Kings of magnanimous nature (*Dhīrodāṭṭa*) have *Pazhukka* make-up, and their face is painted in a reddish colour. Haughty characters like Rāvaṇa have the *Katti* type; as in Kathakali here also there is a round ball on the tip of the nose. Princes like Arjuna, Mitrāvasu and Rāma before coronation have the *Pacca* type of make-up. Bhīma, Bāli and Sugrīva are in *Pazhukka*. The female characters have also the *Pazhukka* make-up, and have special dress, jacket and an upper garment (*Uttariya*) rolled like a sacred thread. Śūrpaṇakhā has the black *Kari* make-up, and wears a sort of head-dress made of grass. For Hanumān, the jacket, head-dress and tail are made of cotton. Śaṅkhakarna, the attendant of Rāvaṇa, has a special head-dress called *Kolappurattaṭṭa*.

The first item in make-up, etc. is the tying of a red silk round the head.



### REALISTIC STAGE-TRICKS

There are several stories about various realistic scenes said to have been enacted in ancient times; but most of them are not staged now-a-days. Some of them may be noted here :

(a) *Parakkum Kūttā*, or Flying Dance. This was the staging of the Fourth Act of the *Nāgānanda*, where Garuḍa actually comes down from the sky. It is said that with the help of thousands of strings tied to the different parts of the artificial wings used by the actor, it was possible to flutter the wings in the air and slide down to the ground from above. The strings were to be manipulated by the Nambyār. The tradition is that the actor assuming the rôle of Garuḍa had to come down flying, circling thrice, and take the red *Tecci* flower garland put on the body of the prince and fly up. We do not know how far this is reliable. There is a story about a Cākyar of Kuṭṭaṇceri, who acted this scene at Koṭuṇṇallūr, and was seriously injured because of some mistake in the handling of the string. There is a verse about that incident :

*Kuṭṭaṇceri Cākkīyāru Koṭuṇṇallūr paṇanna nāl  
tadā vannu tarkkeṭu tala tūṇṇikkīṭannu poy*

(b) *Ozhukal* (Flowing). This is a scene from the *Tapatisaṁ-varana* where the heroine jumps into the river. This too is not staged at present. It is said that the river was to be made up of thousands of strings kept tightly in a horizontal way, the Naṇyār who took the rôle of the heroine had to move as if she were flowing in the river. Such things could be staged even without the help of strings, as is found in the Peking Opera 'where on ordinary level ground two men sail in a boat tossed on troubled waters.'

(c) *Hanging Scene*. It is from the *Nāgānanda* where the heroine Malayavatī tries to commit suicide by hanging herself. This is staged even now by the Naṇyār. A ring is made of cloth and is hung from above. The heroine stands on a stool, and catching the ring with her hands jumps, keeping the neck near the ring. She comes down turning round and round. With the help of the proper facial expression, this scene is very effective on the stage.

(d) *Niṇam Aṇiccal*. In the *Śūrpaṇakhāṇika* of the *Āścarya-*

*cūḍāmaṇi* the scene where Lakṣmaṇa deforms Śūrpaṇakhā is staged in a realistic manner. She appears with blood oozing from her nose and breasts. Though the Sanskrit texts refer only to the cutting of her nose and ears, the Cākyārs have added the cutting of her breasts also. The modern Kathakali has borrowed such *Niṇamaṇiecal* scenes from *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. Such scenes are referred to as *Śūrpaṇakhāṅka* in Kathakali, even though the story may be different, as in *Narakāsuravadha* where the victim is not Śūrpaṇakhā but *Simhikā*.

#### VACIKABHINAYA

The *Vācikābhinaya* consists in the correct and proper utterance of the words of the texts by the actors. This is very important in *Kūṭṭa* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*. The Cākyārs have a unique way of reciting the Sanskrit and Prakrit passages. It is very slow, syllable by syllable. There are certain Rāgas used for the recitation, depending on the context and the sentiment. These Rāgas are not the same as the Rāgas in music; but are the Rāgas of recitation. The mutual relationship between these Rāgas of recitation and the Rāgas of music needs further study. Even the exact nature of these Rāgas of recitation used by the Cākyārs is not quite clear. The following names of the Rāgas are known<sup>1</sup> :

*Muḍḍa Śrīkaṇṭhī, Toṇṭa, Ārttan, Indalam, Muralīndalam, Velādhūli, Dāṇa, Tarkan, Vīratarkkan, Korakkuriṇṇi, Porālī, Puṇanīr, Duḥkhaḡāṇdhāra, Ceṭi, Pañcamadāṇa, Śrīkāmara, Kaiśikī, Ghaṭṭantari, Antari.*

The list is found in the following verses in Malayalam :

*Muḍḍan śrīkaṇṭhi toṇṭārttan indalam muralīndalam |*  
*Velādhūli tathā dāṇam tarkanum vīratarkanum |*  
*Korakkuriṇṇi porāli puranīrum tathaiva ca |*  
*Duḥkhaḡāṇdhāravum pinne ceṭi pañcamadāṇavum ||*  
*Śrīkāmaram kaiśikiyum ghaṭṭantariyum antari ||*

There are certain rules as to their employments : *Muḍḍa* for love-in-union of Rākṣasīs, *Muralīndala* for that of *Srīrāma*, *Korakkuriṇṇi* for the monkeys, *Puṇanīr* for describing the rainy

<sup>1</sup> Pointed out by V. Rājarāja Varma Rāja and others.



season and Śrīkanthī at the end of the Act, and for killing evil persons, etc. :

राक्षसीनां तु संभोगशृङ्गारे मुहु इष्यते ।  
श्रीरामस्य तु संभोगशृङ्गारे मुरलीन्दलः ॥  
कारवकुरिञ्जी रागेषु वानराणां विशेषतः ।  
पुरनीराख्यरागस्तु वर्षाकालस्य वर्णने ।  
अङ्कावसाने श्रीकण्ठी दुष्टानां च निबर्हणे ॥

The manuals giving the stage directions indicate the particular Rāgas to be adopted in each case. Thus Vasantaka in the *Mantrāṅka* is asked to hum and sing in Kaiśikī : *Pūrvam kaiśikiyil iranṭu mūli, ranṭu pāṭi pinne ālāmāṁ collu*. The prose text in the beginning of that Act, 'modaa...' is to be in Velādhūli. In some cases directions for alternative Rāgas are also given. The Nāndī verse in *Bhagavadajjukīya* is in Indala ; the verse 'Navakuvalaya-dhāmnōh...' by Arjuna in the *Subhadrādhanañjaya* is in the Rāga called *Ārttan*. In spite of such details given, the distinctions between these Rāgas and the significance of these are not quite clear.

Sometimes other peculiarities of pronunciation are also introduced as effective stage tricks. Thus in the Act on *Vālivadha* in the *Abhiṣekanāṭaka*, Vālī is introduced as a stammerer, and Śaṅkukarṇa is made to lisp. These are innovations not found in the original text. The difference in sex is also indicated by the tone, especially in mono-acting, where the same actor speaks in the voice of several people.

The original dramatic texts themselves contain Sanskrit and Prakrit passages. In Kerala the Cākyārs introduced Malayalam; sometimes an artificial Malayalam Prakrit is also used. It is only the Vidūṣaka who speaks in the local language Malayalam. His own words he first speaks in Prakrit, then its Sanskrit *Chāyā* is given. This is followed by a Malayalam rendering, at times amounting to detailed explanation elucidating the suggested ideas in the original. One example may be given. In the beginning of the *Mantrāṅka*, the Vidūṣaka says :

भो देवउलपीठिआए मम मोदअमल्लजं णिक्खिपिअ दक्खिणामासआणि गणिअ  
बन्धिअ पडिणिवुत्तो इदाणीं मम मोदअमल्लअं ण पेक्खामि ।

The Sanskrit *Chāyā* is :

भो देवकुलपीठिकायां मम मोदकमल्लकं निक्षिप्य दक्षिणामाषकाणि गणयित्वा  
बद्धा प्रतिनिवृत्त इदानीं मोदकमल्लकं न पश्यामि ।

Then follows the Malayalam version :

*Kaṣṭam, bhadrakālīmukkālivaṭṭattu puramtiṇṇemmel ṇān aṭa  
veccu, dakṣiṇayāyikkittiya ponnumnurukkukal eṇṇikkeṭṭi puram  
tiriṇṇu nokkiyappol eṇṇe aṭa kāṇanilla.*

The Malayalam rendering is generally very detailed. Thus the introductory portion of Śāṇḍilya's speech in the beginning of the *Bhagavadajjukīya* is more than two pages long in the Malayalam rendering. This is followed by a detailed study of the text, explaining all the relevant, and often irrelevant portions, and introducing many an extraneous point, humorous and instructive. Thus for term *karāṭakasamddhe* in the text, the Malayalam version has the following :

*Munname tanne ippūmiyil eṇṇānum ārānum cattāl pattu nālum  
kazhiṇṇu patinonnāmnāl vaipporu karāṭakam oṇṭu piṇḍam Atu  
veccāl aṇṇe ccezhikkum coṇṇuṇṇumūtum ceytu atukōṇṇe  
maṭṭellāppuṭṭiyum uṇṭāyi.*

It may be noted here that Nārāyaṇa's commentary on the *Bhagavadajjukīya* closely follows the Malayalam version of the *Cākyārs* ; and the commentator has stated that his work is intended to help the actors in staging the play.

कृशाशयावशकुशीलवमात्रहिता यदि तु भविष्यतीयमियता सफलैव कृतिः ।

In *Vācikābhinaya* the Vidūṣaka sometimes represents even the significance of the pure sounds of words uttered. In Act I of the *Subhadrādhanañjaya*, while he is wandering in the forest and is thirsty he is attracted by a mirage. Then he hears Arjuna's words, *Sakhe Kaṇḍinya !*. First he hears only the sound 'é é é' and thinks that it is the sound of the waves in the pond ; again he is called, now he hears the sound 'khē' ; he says that it must be the sound of the frogs in the pond. This reminds him of his younger days when he used to pierce the eyes of frogs with ribs of coconut leaves. While he is in such a reminiscent mood, he again hears the words, *Sakhe Kaṇḍinyā*. It is only now that he understands that his friend Arjuna is calling him.



Besides the macaronic *Maṇipravāla* style of mixing Malayalam and Sanskrit words indiscriminately which became a sort of standard literary language in Malayalam because of its usage by the Vidūṣaka, there is also a kind of Prakritized artificial Malayalam, sometimes adopted by the Vidūṣaka by the frequent use of phonemes like *s*, *ṇ*, *tt*h ; this produces some humorous effect ; but it did not become popular. An example :

*Tirunaṃajjhivāyamantramonaṇṇume gasi. Esāṇumasu ellatthirakku matthire sāṇumasu, (for, tirunamaśśivāyamantram onnumé gati, etānum atu ellāvarkkum atre tānumatu).*

#### SATTVIKABHINAYA

*Sāttvikābhinaya* occupies a very important place in successful acting, and is concerned with the realistic representation of the consequents, or the external manifestations of the internal feelings and producing the proper mood in the audience. In the *Nāṭya-śāstra*, Bharata devotes one chapter to the *Sāttvikābhinaya*. In Kerala both for the *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and the Kathakali the *Sāttvikabhāvābhinaya* is done with great care. With the help of the delicate movements of the eyes, brows, lips and cheeks, but without any gesture of the hand, the actor is able to reproduce fully the *Stobha* or the facial expression and the moods correctly. In *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* many ideas are thus silently indicated even without the help of gestures. The *Sāttvikābhinaya* is generally known as *Nokkikkāṇuka*, 'looking and observing.' A well-known example is the description of the hermitage as Arjuna sees it.

शिखिनि शलभो ज्वालाचक्रैर्न विक्रियते पतन्  
पिबति बहुशः शार्दूलिनां स्तनं मृगशाबकः ।  
स्पृशति कलभः सैर्ही दंष्ट्रां मृणालधिया मुहुः  
नयति नकुलं निद्रातन्द्रीं लिहन्नहिपोतकः ॥<sup>1</sup>

"The fire burns, a moth flies round about it and falls in it, but surprisingly it is not burned. In another place a young deer sucks the breast of a tigress. There is a young elephant in another part of the hermitage, pulling a lion's teeth. A young snake licks an ichneumon to sleep."

The effect of seeing these scenes is clearly indicated on the

<sup>1</sup> *Subhadrādhanañjaya*, 1.9

face of the actor by the subtle movements of the various parts of the face, and the *Sāttvikabhāvas* like horripilation, perspiration, etc. The *Sāttvikābhinaya* takes place first ; it is only afterwards that the verse is recited slowly, and explained with the help of *Āṅikābhinaya*.

#### VIDUŠAKA

The Vidūṣaka is the most prominent character in *Kūṭṭa* and *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* ; his rôle has grown in size and importance in the course of time, and has almost overshadowed all the other characters of the plays enacted. He is the only person who speaks in the local Malayalam language, and explains the Sanskrit and Prakrit passages spoken by the other characters in his presence. Both by his words and by his actions he adds to the humorous element. It is no wonder that he has come to occupy a unique position in the traditional Kerala stage.

The Vidūṣaka's make-up and costumes are quite suited to enhance the humorous sentiment. Rice flour is smeared roughly over his face, chest and arms : over that red marks are made on the forehead, nose, cheeks, chin, chest and arms. The eyes are smeared over thickly with collyrium, even over the eyelids extending on either side as far as the ears. Prominent moustache is made, one side raised up and the other side hanging down. He has a *Kākapada* tuft of hair ; but he wears a kind of head-dress. On one ear he has a red garland made of *Tecci* flowers, and on the other ear a roll of betel-leaves, reminding one of the description of Bhaṭṭaputra in *Kuṭṭanīmata* : *ekasmin dalaviṭakam aparasmin sīsapatrakam karṇe*.

The dress is also ludicrous ; the portion covering the hips is made very thick and bulging. Besides the sacred thread, he has an upper garment, *Uttariya*, which is spread out, but kept rolled up. He acts as if he has in his mouth something to eat and is chewing it now and then. Playing with the sacred thread is a frequent occupation of the hands. Others are to arrange the tuft of hair and tie it ; to take the *Uttariya*, fold it and squeeze it to remove water out of it, and use it as a fan all over the body. He normally speaks in the *Indala svara*, but changes the tone to suit the context. He has a stick with him ; he can keep it on his lap while he is sitting.



He has absolute freedom of speech. "Personal references, pointed allusions and innuendos were the weapons put into the hands of the Cākyārs and, these they used unsparingly, whether the victims were princes or nobles, patricians or plebians, when the good of the society necessitated an exposure of their conduct." Under the pretext of describing the earlier life-history of the Vidūṣaka, as *Nirvahaṇa*, there is a parody on the four *Puruṣārthas*, or aims of existence.

The aims of the corrupt society are Food, Enjoyment, Deception and Jobs under the king. The Vidūṣaka takes four days for his *Nirvahaṇa*. The section on *Vaṇcana* (Deception) is not dealt with in detail. The first day is devoted to *Vādu-tīrkkal* or reconciliation of quarrels. The second day deals with *Vinoda* ; many episodes are narrated which might cross the boundary of decency. *Aśana* (eating) is described on the third day ; and *Rājasevā* on the fourth. Some Sanskrit verses and hundreds of *Maṇipravāla* verses are recited and explained by the Vidūṣaka in the course of the *Puruṣārtha* discussion.

The Vidūṣaka explains elaborately through words, and illustrates with apt and humorous stories and anecdotes some of the well-known classical verses like the following recited as benedictory invocation :

ब्रह्मा येन कुलालवन्नियमितो ब्रह्माण्डभाण्डोदरे  
विष्णुर्येन दशावतारगहने क्षितो महासङ्कटे ।  
शम्भुर्येन कपालवाणिपुटके भिक्षामटन् वर्तते  
सूर्यो भ्राम्यति नित्यमेव गगने तस्मै नमः कर्मणे ॥

Here is an example for the poetry written by an ignorant fool :

पाञ्चालीं दशकन्धरो नृपसभे कृत्वा विकृष्टाम्बरां  
भीमस्तत्परिरक्षणार्थमकरोत् सेतुं बदर्याश्रमे ।  
नाराचैश्च घटोत्कचं निहतवान् रोषाकुलो राघवः  
साकूतं प्रययौ सुयोधन इति प्रायेण रामायणम् ॥

Various theories about politics and the different types of kings and their administration were used to be discussed by the Vidūṣaka while explaining the term *avalagna* in the *Mantrāṅka* after defining the term as :

षष्ठमंशं गृहीत्वा तु भूमिं धत्ते नराधिपः ।  
अवलग्न इति ख्यातः सर्वेषां प्रीतिवर्धनः ॥

While explaining the Malayalam verse on the great happiness of meeting one's friend when the Vidūṣaka meets his friend in *Mantrāṅka* :

*dāhe taṇṇīr, koṭiya virehe kāntayoṭulle saṅgam  
tāpodreke taṇal api tamassaṅkaṭe ca pradīpaḥ  
pevellattil patitasamaye toṇiyennevamādīny  
āpatkālatābhimatasuhr̥tprāpityoṭonnum ovvā*

the Vidūṣaka illustrates the idea with various stories. Reference to pseudo-physicians and their practices also seem to have been made in this context. Thus it seems probable that the tradition of the *Puruṣārtha* discussion arose from the Vidūṣaka of the *Mantrāṅka*, and later spread to the other plays. The Vidūṣaka has become a typical character ; his *Nirvahaṇa* is the same, whatever may be the play enacted.

The section on *Vinoda* starts with the following verse :

वक्त्राम्भोजात् कदाचिन्न हि कमलभुवा मुच्यते भारती सा  
वक्षःपीठेन धत्ते किल मधुमथनः कन्यकामम्बुराशेः ।  
सोऽयं कन्दर्पर्वरिः शिवशिव शिवया संविभक्तार्थगात्रः  
सुत्राम्णे स्वस्तिवाचा जगति विजयते मान्मथोऽयं विकारः ॥

Not only Brahmins, but also members of the other communities become objects of the Vidūṣaka's sarcastic comments. It is likely that emphasis was made on different aspects, depending on the social condition, and many later verses have also crept into the fold of the earlier ones. Several verses in *Maṇipravāla* style, from a work called *Vaiśikatantra* almost on the model of the *Kuṭṭanīmata*, are given in the stage-manuals of *Mantrāṅka*.

The section on food, *Aśana*, starts with the following invocation to Gaṇapati :

यस्यासौ प्रातराशाय धनेशोऽपि न शक्नुयात् ।  
अपरिच्छेद्यरूपं तं गणेश्वरमुपास्महे ॥

The main theme is the description of the sumptuous feast in connection with the annual ceremony of the death of Nṇiṇḍim Nāikkar Appan ; the gluttons who attend the feast are the Brahmins of



Anadhītaṁgālam village. Various types of hosts are described under the classes : *Sarasa-virasa*, *Virasa-sarasa*, *Virasa-virasa* and *Sarasa-sarasa*, and their characteristics explained with apt stories. The advice to the would-be guest is :

सरसविरसगेहं भोक्तुकामो न गच्छेत्  
विरससरसगेहं कष्टपक्षे प्रयातु ।  
विरसविरसगेहं मा क्षुधापीडितोऽपि  
सरससरसगेहं यातु तापोपशान्त्यै ॥

The definition of *Sarasa-virasa* is given with the illustration of a person who invites the traveller to his house, and then dismisses him with the words :

आयाता न च तण्डुलाः परिजनोऽप्यन्यत्र संप्रेषितः  
सा याता पितृमन्दिरं वयमपि प्रायेण यत्रोन्मुखाः ।  
गन्तव्यं भवतान्यदीयभवनं भोक्तुं यदीच्छास्ति चेत्  
नो चेदत्र वसुन्धरैव भवतस्तत्पाय कल्पिष्यताम् ॥

There are several *Kaṛi-śloka*s, describing the various curries and sweets ; the description starts with a comparison of food with a beautiful girl :

*venṇasmeramukhīm varuttu varalum vṛntākadantacchadām*  
*cettoman madhurakkaṛistanataṭām amlopadaṁśodarīm*  
*ceṇārnor erumattayirkkaṭitaṭām ciñṇampazhorudvayīm*  
*enām bhuktivadhūm piriññayi sakhe lokaḥ katham jīvati ?*

Another verse in Sanskrit describes food as a king :

सम्यक् प्रजापालनजागरूकः सर्वप्रियः क्षुद्रजनैरदृश्यः ।  
चतुर्विधामात्यरसानुकूलो जयत्यसावोदनभूमिपालः ॥

Most of the verses are in *Maṇipravāla* style. They describe the popular curries and other items of food in ancient Kerala. The final prayer of the gluttons is that they may have a similar feast of *Pantraṇṭām Māsam* the next year also, unconsciously suggesting thereby that someone in the family should die immediately :

*ī neṭumpurayiltanne varum kollavumādarāl*  
*Pantraṇṭāmmāsam uñṭāvān prārthikkunnen sadāyppoṭhm*

The section on *Rājasevā* is taken up last. It discusses the various types of kings, good and bad ; the *Vidūṣaka* gets ample

opportunity here to criticize the administration, point out the defects of corruption like bribery, with sharp thrusts. Being a fool he has the liberty to criticize even the king. Topical allusions are found plenty in this section, more than in others. Explaining how the Vidūṣaka came to enter into the service of the king, the hero of the play selected for staging, this humorous section is connected with the main story, as part of the earlier life of the Vidūṣaka.

Verses on food and sex are found profusely in the speeches of the Vidūṣaka even in the course of his normal acting of the text. There is a rule that whenever anybody talks in the presence of the Vidūṣaka, he must explain it in Malayalam. In the case of Prakrit passages, he first gives the Sanskrit *Chāyā* and then the Malayalam version. His own original words are first spoken in fluent Prakrit, then the Sanskrit *Chāyā* follows, and later comes the explanation. While explaining the hero's words, he illustrates by narrating his own experiences similar to those described by the hero ; since his associations are mainly with food and the maid-servants, the parallels he brings are naturally from these two spheres. These parodies are called *Pratiśloka*. The *Svapnavāsavadatta* verse,

स्मराम्यवन्त्याधिपतेः सुतायाः प्रस्थानकाले स्वजनं स्मरन्त्याः ।

बाष्पं प्रवृद्धं नयनान्तलग्नं स्नेहान्ममैवोरसि पातयन्त्याः ॥

has the following *Pratiśloka* :

*smarāmi vānāriyute sutāyāḥ nelkuttukāle taviṭum*

*smarantyāḥ |*

*śleṣmam pravṛddham nijahastalagnam snehānmamaivorasi*

*pātayantyāḥ ||*

The *Nāgānanda* verse,

नीताः किं न निशाः शशाङ्कहृदयो नात्रातमिन्दीवरं

किं नोन्मीलितमालतीसुरभयः सोढाः प्रदोषानिलाः ।

भङ्गारः कमलाकरे मधुलिहां किं वा मया न श्रुतो

निर्व्याजं विधुरेष्वधीर इति मां केनाभिधत्ते भवान् ॥

is parodied thus :

*nītāḥ kim pṛthumodakāḥ na divasāḥ nāghrātam amṁāmpazham*  
*kim conmilitacārujīrakarasāḥ soḍhāś ca pākānilāḥ*



*sīlākrāḥ kaṭukum vaṛuttu kaṛiyil-k-kūṭṭunna neram śruto  
nirvyājam viruṇeṣvadhīra iti mām kenābhidhatte bhavān ?*

The Vidūṣaka provokes laughter even by the style of his speech, using Sanskrit suffixes to pure Malayalam stems as in the following description of a sunset in *Subhadrādhanañjaya* :

*tālppūṭṭayanti takarāḥ kaṛikoytaśeṣāḥ  
kākāḥ karañṇu maram eriyurañṇayanti  
mañṭanti pānthanivahāḥ paṭibandhapetyā  
minnāminuñṇunivahāś ca minuñṇayanti*

#### NATANKUSA

In an anonymous work called *Naṭāṅkuśa* the method of staging Sanskrit plays by the Cākyārs of Kerala is criticized severely, as taking too much liberty with the text, as contravening the rules of dramaturgy, and as obstructing the dominant sentiment by the addition of extraneous matter. Though the attacks are prejudiced and one-sided, they help in understanding the condition of the Sanskrit stage in Kerala in the middle ages, and are hence extremely useful to the students of the evolution of the Sanskrit stage in Kerala. Some of the important points raised there may be noted. The author takes as illustration the *Āṅgulīyāṅka* of the *Āścarya-cūḍāmaṇi* and the *Mantrāṅka* of the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa*.

(a) The dance called *Kriyā* (*Kriya Caviṭṭuka*) after the introduction of the main character is not sanctioned by any text on dramaturgy. Dances with *Āṅgahāras* and *Cārīs* are prescribed as part of the *Pūrvaraṅga* by Bharata. The term *Karāṇa* for various hand-movements is also known ; but not the term *Kriyā* in such a technical sense. *Pūrvaraṅga* dances should not be introduced after the main character has entered the stage. Thus in the *Āṅgulīyāṅka* we do not know whether it is Hanumān or the actor who does the *Kriyā*. The procedure for the *Kriya Caviṭṭal* with dances and songs in a certain way handed down from generations is not based on any known text on dramaturgy :

कांचित् कथां समारभ्य पुनस्तां विसृज्य मध्ये देवतार्था क्रिया क्रियते इति  
कोऽयं नमः ।

क्रियेयं देवताप्रीतिविधये जायते यदि ।

नाट्यात् प्रागेव नान्दीव प्रयोक्तव्या भवेद् ध्रुवम् ॥

न केवलमयं नृत्तविशेषो नाट्यमध्यगः ।

अमुष्य वाचकः शब्दः क्रियेत्येषोऽपि नूतनः ॥

(b) During the Nirvahana of each character the entire story of his life till the incidents to be staged in the Act selected is explained in detail with the help of verses sung by the Nañyār. This is unwanted and unwarranted. The playwright has arranged the plot in such a way omitting certain portions and expanding certain others. Explaining those incidents which have been purposely omitted or summarised by the writer is not the proper method of staging a play. It is also against the natural development of the sentiment. The audience is interested in the present, not the past :

प्रबन्धानुसारी खलु प्रयोगः । कवेरनुमतमभिनयनीयम् । न तावत् कविभिर्नाटिकादौ नायकानां चरितमुत्पत्तेरेव प्रभृति विलयपर्यन्तमुपनिबध्यते । न च प्रारब्धभागादारभ्य आसमापयिषितभागादखिलमुन्मील्यते । यद्वस्तु यतो वा निबद्धं ततथैव प्रयोक्तृभिः परिग्राह्यम् । न किञ्चिदपि पौरोभाग्यमाचरणीयम् ॥

(c) Resorting to mono-acting is also wrong. When the playwright has introduced different characters, they must appear on the stage. The actor comes to the stage as Hanumān in the costume and make-up of a monkey ; if he attempts to play the role of Sītā, the heroine, with the monkey's costume and make-up, it will look ridiculous. The holding of a garment to indicate that the actor assumes the rôle of Sītā is not proper. There are many scenes where the characters introduced in the text are not actually brought on the stage, the same actor taking all the different rôles in turn. This cannot be considered to be correct or conforming to the spirit of the text :

कपिरूपमुपादाय लाङ्गूलादिविशेषितम् ।

सीता भूत्वा विलासादिनटनं साधु साध्विदम् ॥

एकोऽनुकार्यो वेषेण तथान्योऽप्याङ्गिकादिना ।

इति केनोपदिष्टं वा क्व वालौकिकमागमे ॥

यदिदं कपिवरभूमिकायां सीतानुकरणोपक्रमे चेलाञ्चलोल्लम्बनं क्रियते तत् किं नाम भवेत् ।...

हनुमान् बालतः पृष्टे सीता वसनतः पुरः ।

अहो नाट्याधिरूढस्य वेषोपादानचातुरी ॥



आहार्येण कपिश्रेष्ठो रामादिस्त्वाङ्गिकादिना ।

दृश्येते सममेकस्येत्येष कुत्र भवो नयः ॥

(d) There are some innovations made by the actors which are not sanctioned by the text, or by any other authoritative works. Thus in depicting Lakṣmaṇa's disfiguring of Śurpaṇakhā, the Kerala actors portray the cutting off not only of the nose and the ears, but also her breasts. Neither the text of the drama nor the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki supports this :

शूर्पणखाङ्गे वैरूप्यकृतौ तस्याः स्तनद्वयसंच्छेदनमपि...वितन्यते, तस्य किं नाम मूलं भवेत् । न तावन्नाटकं, तत्र खलु निशाचर्याः कर्णनासिके इत्येतावदेवोक्तम् ।  
आर्षेऽपि '...चिच्छेद कर्णनासं' इत्येवास्ति । तस्मात्स्वयंकृतमेवेदम् ।<sup>1</sup>

(e) The introduction of the Malayalam passages in *Mantrāṅka* of *Pratijñāyugandharāyaṇa* is also against the rules of dramaturgy, which sanction the use of Sanskrit and Prakrit only for the characters. The sanction for the use of local language found in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is a suggestion to the poet, not to the producer or the actor. It is the Vidūṣaka who normally uses Malayalam, and it is to introduce humour, and to explain the ideas to the illiterate audience :

मन्त्राङ्गे वसन्तकः केरलभाषायां भाषते । तदपि न पर्यालोचनां समर्हति ।  
नाटकेषु नूनं प्रतिपात्रं भाषानियमो विद्यते ।...ननु

देशभाषाक्रियावेषभाषणाः स्युः प्रवृत्तयः ।

लोकादेवावगम्यैता यथौचित्यं प्रयोजयेत् ॥

इति वचनादेवमनुष्ठीयते, साधो इदं वचनं कविकर्तृकपाठयोजनाविषयम् ।

मोदग्रन्थे महता वाग्जालेन राजनयप्रकटनं क्रियते, तत् कस्योपकारकं भविष्यति । को वा पृच्छति कीदृशो राजा राज्यं पालयेदिति येन—

एवंविधैर्गुणैर्युक्तो राजा राजगुणान्वितः ।

जितेन्द्रियः सुवृत्तश्च चतुरन्तां महीं जयेत् ॥

इति राजवृत्तमुपक्रमेत ।

(f) In the comic episodes (*Prahasanas*) the Brahmins are described as having illicit connection with Śūdra women, which is against the *Dharmaśāstra* rules. This must be considered as

<sup>1</sup> This is based on the *Kampa-Rāmāyaṇa* version.



obscene, and what is against the normal decency should not be represented on the stage.

(g) The detailed discussion of political theories (*Rājanayas*) is introduced in a far-fetched manner, as an explanation of the word *Avalagna*. It has no reference to Udayana or Pradyota, and the audience is not interested in the qualifications of a perfect king.

(h) Using the Malayalam verse 'dāhe taṇṇīr.....' the actor goes on describing the various kinds of drinks and the pseudo-physicians. This is far-fetched and has nothing to do with the context. The author says :

दाहे इत्यादि भाषापद्यमापाद्य पानीयवर्णनायामेवंविधजननिवारको वैद्यवराक  
इति वैद्यनिन्दार्थोऽत्यन्तं दूरभूताः ।...शाखाचक्रमणैरेवं भवान् साधु हरिर्भवान् ।

(i) The introduction of extraneous verses by the singer, Naṇyār, in the middle of the acting now and then is also unwarranted. Thus in *Mantrāṅka* verses like the following :

वरडिण्डिकवेषविभूषणवानुरुदण्डधरो भसिताच्छतनुः ।  
मृदुभस्मकपुण्ड्रकमण्डनवात् विशतीह वसन्तक एष कृती ॥

(j) The general rule about battle, death, etc. as unsuitable to be represented on the stage is also discarded in *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* :

अङ्गपात्रेण प्रथनं वधविधानं दूराह्वानमित्याद्यनुष्ठीयते तदपि नाट्यविदां हृदय-  
मावर्जयितुं न क्षमम् ।

It may be noted that most of these points raised here in the *Naṭāṅkuśa* are true of the Kerala stage practice of the Cākyārs. Whether all such deviations are to be condemned or not depends on the point of view one takes at these problems. In any case it is important as shedding light on the peculiarities of the staging of Sanskrit plays by the Cākyārs in Kerala.







**COVER:**  
A scene from Kutlyattam of Bhasa's *Svapna-  
vasavadattam* : The Hero and the Vidushaka.